

ARTICLE APPEARED
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NEW YORK TIMES
1 OCTOBER 1982

Security of U.S. Said to Be Hurt By Data Leaks

Flow of Information to Soviet Found Harmful

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 30 — A panel of experts appointed by the National Academy of Sciences has concluded that there has been "substantial and serious" leakage of American technology to the Soviet Union. The leakage included "a significant portion" that is "damaging to national security," the panel said in a report released today.

But the panel, which was given top-secret intelligence briefings, found that open scientific communications and ex-

Excerpts from report, page A11.

changes, particularly the activities of universities, played "a very small part" in the leakage.

It also warned that Government efforts to clamp down on the free flow of scientific information "could be extremely damaging to overall scientific and economic advance as well as to military progress."

'Damaging Transfers'

The head of the 19-member panel, Dr. Dale R. Corson, president emeritus of Cornell University, told a news conference that "these damaging transfers have occurred" through legal sales of products to the Soviet Union in periods of détente, through illegal sales of proscribed products, through transfers of American technology to the Soviet Union by third world countries and through "a highly organized espionage operation."

The report, entitled "Scientific Communication and National Security," does not give details on how any particular technology leaked to the Soviet Union was applied to military purposes.

But it cites intelligence estimates that the militarily significant technologies acquired by the Soviet Union and East European nations include such items as computer hardware and software, mirror technology suitable for laser weapons, advanced inertial guidance systems for missiles, jet engine designs, underwater navigation equipment and information on space satellite technology.

The panel's report thus gives support to both sides of an increasingly acrimonious debate between national security officials and the scientific community concerning the extent to which security restrictions should be applied to scientific knowledge.

"The panel has no reason to doubt," the report said, "Government assertions that such acquisitions from the West have permitted the Soviet military to develop countermeasures to Western weapons, improve Soviet weapon performance, avoid hundreds of millions of dollars in R&D costs, and modernize critical sectors of Soviet military production."

However, the panel said it had reached a "strong consensus" that "universities and open scientific communication have been the source of very little of this technology transfer problem." The panel said it had been shown "no documented examples" of national security damage from open scientific communications, and it expressed "serious doubt" that the Soviet Union could "reap significant direct military benefits" from the flow of scientific information "in the near term."

The group's central conclusion, emphasized in a news release accompanying its report, is that national security is more apt to be enhanced through a policy of open scientific communication that promotes scientific accomplishment rather than through a policy of secrecy controls that yield "limited and uncertain benefits."

The report was greeted warmly by George A. Keyworth 2d, President Reagan's science adviser, who said he found "very helpful the arguments that the report makes for security through accomplishment, rather than security through secrecy." He added: "The last thing we want to do is ape the repressive Soviet model, which stifles technological innovation through its obsession with secrecy."

The report was called "a good start" by Adm. Bobby R. Inman, former Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, who caused a furor in the scientific community by suggesting the need for voluntary restrictions on a wide range of research findings. He said the report agreed with his contention that there has been "substantial technology loss" and that research scientists should take a hand in attempting to prevent it. But he urged a follow-up study on industrial research, which he described as "a very major part of the problem."

The Defense Department simply said that the report "will provide an excellent opportunity for future dialogue."

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